

BRANCHING OUT

Creating Connections to End Sexual Violence

Spring 2011

Volume 5, Issue 1

8th Annual Take Back the Night April 14th 5:00-7:00

By Terri DeWalt



A woman walks alone down a dark, deserted street. With every shadow she sees, and every sound she hears, her pounding heart flutters and skips a beat. She hurries her pace as she sees her destination become closer. She is almost there. She reaches the front door, goes inside, collects herself, and moves on forgetting, at least for tonight, the gripping fear that momentarily enveloped her life.

This scene could have occurred anywhere last night, last year, or even 100 years ago. Historically, women faced the anxiety of walking alone at night and that is why Take Back the Night began.

In honor of April, as Sexual Assault Awareness Month the month, Sexual Assault Services (SAS) will be hosting **Racine County's 8th Annual Take Back the Night (TBTN) on April 14th 2011, from 5:00-7:00 p.m.** The event will begin at 5:00 at the Racine Public Library (75 Seventh St. Racine, 53403) and end with food, refreshments and awareness displays at Olympia Brown Unitarian Universalist Church (625 College Ave. Racine, 53403).

Take Back The Night is an opportunity to bring awareness to sexual violence within our community and to give power back to sexual assault survivors and their allies. The event is free and open to all community members. A statewide speaker and survivor of sexual assault will be the keynote speaker. In addition, the 2nd Annual Sexual Assault Awareness Month Awards will be presented to a community professional and a SAS Volunteer Advocate, both of whom contributed to our program in an exceptional way during the past year. The Stars of Courage Project, which represents every survivor SAS has worked with over the past twelve years, will be on display at the Racine Public Library. The Clothesline Project, a collection of t-shirts created by survivors and support people, will be on display at Olympia Brown Unitarian Universalist Church.

The first documented Take Back the Night in the United States was held in October 1975 in Philadelphia after the murder of young microbiologist, Susan Alexander Speeth, who was stabbed by a stranger a block from her home while walking alone. Since that time people started to stand up and speak out against sexual violence under the banner of Take Back the Night. During those years, Take Back the Night

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Rompiendo la Barrera

Breaking the Barrier

As the Bilingual Outreach Advocate I want to make sure everyone is aware of the specific services that Sexual Assault Services (SAS) can provide to Spanish speaking victims and their families, and also give you an update on our outreach efforts. We are able to provide personal, medical, and legal advocacy to victims that are Spanish speaking. We give victims and their families information and referrals for community resources as well as help them navigate these resources. Although we are limited in the language services we can provide (i.e., interpreting), we can provide some assistance to victims in this area. I provide personal advocacy according to the needs of the victim, including help with the U-Visa or VAWA Visa. The U-Visa and VAWA Visa are amazing programs available to victims who are undocumented. Please contact me if you want more information concerning these two visas; I would be glad to send information to you. Additionally, if you come across any victims who could be eligible for these visas, please refer them to me. I would love to provide advocacy and support to them.

In addition to providing direct services to sexual assault victims, I also provide outreach in the community. Currently, I have been collaborating with the Spanish speaking advocate at the Women's Resource Center. Together, we have reached out to local businesses that have a Spanish speaking or Hispanic clientele and have distributed flyers for our agencies and services. We are also co-chairs for an event in development that is sponsored by the Hispanic Roundtable. This event is called Saber para la Gente. Saber para la Gente (Knowledge for the People) will be an event for community-based organizations to conduct outreach to the Hispanic and Spanish speaking community, with the goal of getting information on available services out into the community. The event will be held on Saturday June 11th at the Racine YMCA. We will be sending more information concerning this event in the near future. If you have any questions about the event, please feel free to contact me.

Another outreach effort I am in the process of planning is to conduct a community roundtable where anyone who works with or is trying to work with the Hispanic/ Spanish speaking community can join me to discuss sexual assault in the Hispanic/Spanish speaking community. I would like to discuss what is currently being done and how we can improve and move forward in reaching this community. I will be sending out invitations to those of you who have shown interest in the past; but even if you have not, if you would like to participate in the roundtable, please contact me.

Finally, I have also had the opportunity to present to a few organizations in the community, and I hope to continue presenting to other community agencies or organizations. If anyone is interested in having

me present about the services I provide to the Spanish speaking community, please contact me, Cassandra De La Rosa, at 262.619.1634 ext. 17 or cassandra.delarosa@lsswis.org.

— Cassie

8th Annual Take Back the Night

Racine's 8th Annual Take Back the Night will be held on Thursday, April 14th, 2011. The event will be held from 5:00– 7:00 p.m. and will begin at the Racine Public Library and proceed with an awareness march to Olympia Brown Unitarian Universalist Church.

Take Back the Night will include speakers, an open mic speak-out, awareness displays, food, drinks and other activities.

Everyone is invited and encouraged to attend this free community event. So join us next week and show your support as we work to end sexual violence in our community!

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became known internationally as a visible way to take a stand against sexual violence. If you have not attended Racine's own TBTN in past years, I would especially encourage you to join us this year. Use this opportunity to show your support of the victims of sexual violence in our community.

If you are interested in making a donation in support of our Take Back the Night or perhaps sponsoring the Clothesline or Stars of Courage projects, please contact us at 262-619-1634 or via email at kadler28@lsswis.org. SAS is grateful to the Racine Public Library and the Olympia Brown Unitarian Universalist Church for their partnership in providing this event.

Sexual Assault Services is funded by United Way of Racine County, Victims of Crime Act grants, Sexual Assault Victim Services grant, Violence Against Women Act grant and the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault.

— Terri

Call For Submissions...



If you are a survivor or you know a survivor who would like to submit a poem, short story, artwork or editorial for publication in this newsletter, please email it to Samantha Sustachek (ssustachek@lsswis.org).





Legislative Update

By Vicki Biehn

On March 31, 2011, five women from Racine County attended the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA) and Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WCADV) Legislative Advocacy Day in Madison. This is a day where citizens come to the capital to talk with their Representative and discuss important issues that are related to sexual and domestic violence survivors. This year Stephanie Wapp, Sue Otto, Claire Eckert, Sherry Hartog and Vicki Biehn attended this event and talked with six representatives or one of their staff.

All the citizens who attended this event met in the Grand Army of the Republic Room in the State Capital building where we were briefed on the issues that we would be discussing with our representatives and listened to two representatives discuss how important it is for them to hear from the public about these issues. After that our group met with Representative Samantha Kerkman, Senator Neal Kedzie, Senator Robert Wirsch, Representative Tyler August, Representative Robin Vos, and Senator Van Wanggaard to share our thoughts about the proposed budget and legislative session.

One of the first items we discussed with the legislators is the proposed cut in the Sexual Assault Victim Services grant (SAVS). This is the only money that Sexual Assault Service Providers (SASPs) receive from the state of Wisconsin to provide critical crisis intervention services to sexual assault survivors and their families in our state. At this point in time, the proposed budget has a 13.9% reduction in this grant. The 2010 grant was \$2,069,500 and the 2011-13 budget will have \$1,782,000 for each year. Our group explained to the legislators that this funding is vitally important to SASPs to provide crisis-intervention, therapy, community trainings, legal advocacy and prevention efforts in schools. By helping victims directly, SASPs also play a large part in the reporting and eventual prosecution of sexual assault crimes, which helps to provide safety to all of the citizens of the state. We requested that program revenue funding of SAVS be restored to its 2010 levels. This is not an extravagant grant program, but it is one that is critical to maintaining SASPs around the state that are helping victims of sexual assault every day.

We also discussed a current proposed bill, Assembly Bill 54. This bill would change current state law related to custody and placement of children. Under current law, courts determine the physical placement of children in paternity and divorce actions in accordance with the best interests of the children. The law directs courts to maximize the time the child spends with each parent in a manner that is consistent with the best interests of the child, and the court must allow for the child to have regularly occurring, meaningful periods of physical placement with each parent. Under the new bill, in most cases, courts would no longer be permitted to consider the best interests of the child when

making placement arrangements. Courts could only consider the child's interest if one party can show by clear and convincing evidence that 50% placement with the other parent would be a detriment to the child. Therefore, courts will be prevented from giving meaningful consideration of the developmental needs of individual children and infants and the strengths and weaknesses of individual parents. Moreover, using a one-size-fits-all formula for physical placement will seriously undermine the effectiveness of protections for domestic and sexual violence victims and their children. In fact, the bill would encourage regularly putting victims and their children in risky custody exchange situations. We asked the representatives to not support this bill.

Another proposed bill is LRB-0787, which would require the courts to become highly involved in many more cases when a parent relocates. The bill would give one parent the ability to prevent the other parent from moving more than 20 miles, even if the move does not involve a change to the child's placement schedule. Currently, a relocation of further than 150 miles may require judicial involvement. We feel that this could prevent victims from finding safety through relocation. Once again we asked the legislators to not support this bill.

The last item we discussed was the elimination of funding for civil legal assistance for survivors. This is funding that supports Legal Action of Wisconsin, Milwaukee Legal Aid Society, Disability Rights Wisconsin, Wisconsin Judicare and others. The \$5.08 million was completely eliminated from the budget and will have a huge impact on low-income people who need critical legal services that protect them in family law actions, evictions, disability cases, public assistance claims, housing foreclosures, employment assistance, consumer cases and other areas. Survivors of sexual and domestic violence routinely rely on Legal Action of Wisconsin in Racine, Kenosha, and Walworth counties to provide representation in divorce, custody, child support, disability and other legal issues. We asked the representatives to restore this vital funding source so that survivors will have legal representation while working towards a violence free life.

There are many other issues that WCASA and WCADV are working on to improve the lives of domestic violence and sexual assault survivors that we did not have the time to discuss with our representatives. If you are interested in these issues, please contact me and I will send you the information. I want to encourage you to contact your representative if you have concerns about these issues. It is critical that they know how you feel about these issues so they can make informed decisions when it comes time to vote on these bills.

If you wish to become more informed and involved with the legislative agenda from WCASA or WCADV please contact Ian Henderson at ianh@wcasa.org or Tony Gibart at tonyg@wcadv.org and ask to be added to the action alert list. When you are added to this list, you will receive e-mails that alert you when action is needed on your part. Usually, you will be asked to call or e-mail your Representative and ask them to support or not support a certain bill. The action that you are asked to do usually only takes a couple of minutes.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to give me a call at 262-763-6226 ext 109 or vbiehn@lsswis.org.

— Vicki



Helping Hands

By Katy Adler

Many people are aware of some of the effects that exposure to trauma can have on individuals. Post-traumatic stress disorder and the symptoms that soldiers returning from combat experience are becoming more widely known and understood. Sexual assault survivors can experience some of the same symptoms as combat veterans. As a result, a goal of SAS advocacy is to mitigate these effects, prevent revictimization, and work with survivors and their support people to understand the impact of trauma.

Memory is one aspect of functioning that trauma significantly impacts. Sexual assault victims often have to recount the story of the assault multiple times and in great detail. Difficulties with memory as a result of the trauma can be misperceived as a lack of cooperation, a false report or the victim changing her or his story. However, when a person is exposed to a trauma (like a sexual assault), the body reacts by releasing a number of different hormones, of which the best known is adrenalin. These chemicals allow us to function with greater strength and endurance. However, as useful as these hormones may be to allow us to react in stressful or traumatic situations, they can also have a negative impact on the brain and the storage of memories.

Chemicals released into the brain directly impact how events are remembered. For survivors, this can effect how they remember a sexual assault in a number of ways. For example, aspects of the assault may be very clear while other parts are blurry or unclear. Survivors may also only remember pieces of the assault, and may not be able to recall the assault from beginning to end in chronological order. This can be confusing and frustrating for those working with survivors. At times, family members, friends, and others who come into contact with the survivor may start to doubt the survivor's account of the assault, which can be re-traumatizing to the survivor. At times, if a survivor does not feel completely supported by family, friends and the criminal justice system, s/he may decide to not cooperate in the prosecution of the perpetrator of the sexual assault.

One of the roles of an Advocate from Sexual Assault Services is to help prevent re-traumatization. One of the ways they may do this is by raising awareness about the effects that trauma can have on memory. A survivor's friends and family members are better able to support the survivor as they gain greater understanding of the effects of trauma, and why the survivor may be unable to recall the sexual assault in a way that they expect (i.e., in a linear fashion, with no gaps in memory.)

The value of having an Advocate present with sexual assault victims has been well documented. A study by Rebecca Campbell (2006) compared the functioning level and services received by

rape survivors who had an Advocate present versus those who did not. The research found that of those victims who worked with an Advocate 36% more received information on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), 23% more received information on HIV, 20% more were tested for pregnancy, 19% more received emergency oral contraception, 30% more received STI prophylaxis and 18% more police reports were filed. In addition, 28% fewer victims who worked with an Advocate felt guilty and/or blamed themselves, and 35% felt less depressed.

Understanding the impact of trauma can help reduce misunderstandings about sexual assault survivors' experiences and can help improve a survivor's rate of recovery. It is the goal of the Advocates and staff at Sexual Assault Services to support victims and help them confront the challenges they face following sexual victimization.

— Katy

Congratulations Sandy!

- ★ Congratulations to Sandy DeWalt who recently won the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault's Voices of Courage Advocate award for the work that she has done and continues to do for SAS.
- ★ Sandy has been a volunteer advocate for SAS for the past 11 years and has donated countless hours on call helping survivors over the crisis line and at the hospital. She has also helped facilitate prevention education groups for middle and high school students and assisted with community events like Take Back the Night. Volunteers like Sandy are the heart of the SAS program, and we would not be able to accomplish nearly as much without them.
- ★ Sandy will be recognized for her hard work at a ceremony in Madison on May 3rd.

SAS Wish List

- Volunteer Advocates!
- Gift cards/certificates from Target, Office Depot, grocery stores or other discount stores
- Courage to Heal book series
- New clothes for victims at the hospital (t-shirts, sweat pants, underwear, etc.)
- Gift bags filled with body lotions & shower gels to be given to victims at the hospital
- Candy for counseling clients
- Bottled water or a water cooler to be used for counseling clients and during volunteer trainings



Family Advocate

By Samantha Sustachek

Here at Sexual Assault Services (SAS), the month of April (and our Spring "Branching Out" newsletter) is dedicated to Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) activities. However, April is also Child Abuse Prevention Month, and since SAS comes into contact with so many children through the Racine County Child Advocacy Center (CAC), as well as through our own counseling program and other services, this important initiative deserves our recognition as well. Unfortunately, by the time children come to the CAC or SAS for services, child abuse has already occurred. We can try to minimize the chances of these children experiencing abuse again, but how do we prevent child abuse from occurring in the first place?

The Child Welfare Information Gateway (www.childwelfare.gov) identifies five protective factors that, when present, are linked to a lower incidence of child abuse and neglect. These factors increase the health and well-being of children and families and help parents who might be at risk of abusing their children to find positive ways to parent, even during the difficult times and stressful situations. The factors are as follows:

Nurturing and Attachment Early on, children need to form attachments with their caregivers. When children and parents have mutual strong, positive feelings, children learn that they can trust their caregivers to provide for their needs. Community professionals can promote nurturing by sharing community resources designed to help parents and children connect with one another, explaining the importance of nurturing and its impact on child behavior and development, and offering parenting strategies that encourage attachment. It is important to acknowledge that attachment is a mutual experience, and as children grow and are better able to relate and express themselves, parents often have an easier time responding positively to them. Parents whose children are not able to show a positive response to them based on factors like age or disability may have a harder time nurturing those children and may need more outside support.

Knowledge of Parenting and of Child and Youth Development This knowledge helps parents to discipline their children in an effective and appropriate way and to provide an environment where children can grow into the best people they can be. Education about child development may give parents more realistic expectations for their children's behavior and abilities. Children can certainly be challenging, but when caregivers understand where they are developmentally and why they engage in certain behaviors, abuse becomes less likely. To aid in this understanding, professionals can share information on child development, including information on developmental challenges and ways to keep kids safe at different ages. Caregivers also need information on parenting, including ways to reinforce

positive behaviors, ways to model desirable behavior, and techniques for nonpunitive discipline when discipline is necessary.

Parental Resilience Resilience refers to a parent's ability to deal with the everyday stress, as well as the occasional crises of raising children. In order to become resilient, caregivers need to be able to identify and communicate about the things that are difficult for them. Community professionals can then help them to cope and refer them to appropriate services to meet their needs and reduce their stress. When people are able to anticipate possible stressors and have resources in place to cope with them, they are more likely to demonstrate resilience. Resilient parents are less likely to take their anger out on their children, and instead are able to creatively problem solve and address challenges. In addition children, who learn by modeling parent behaviors, are learning resilience themselves.

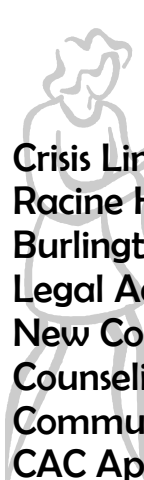
Social Connections Raising children, especially in isolation, is difficult, and social isolation and lack of support are linked to child abuse. Caregivers who have a network of close family and friends to turn to are better able to face the challenges of parenting. Professionals can help parents to make the connections from which they can draw support. Organizations like parenting support groups, playgroups, and baby-sitting co-ops all help to ease the burden of parenting.

Concrete Supports for Parents As if raising children was not difficult enough, many parents face other challenges that contribute to their daily stress and the potential that they could harm their child. When basic needs like housing, food, and clothing are not met, it is difficult to parent effectively. When families have issues with things like AODA or domestic violence, these problems need to be addressed as well. Many people are not aware of the services that are available to help them. Community professionals can educate parents about available services and provide appropriate referrals.

Services like the CAC and SAS are necessary and helpful to children who have experienced abuse. When children receive services and support, they are often able to heal from the trauma of abuse and go on to live happy lives. Despite that fact, thinking about ways to promote a decrease in the amount of child abuse that is occurring is important – during Child Abuse Prevention Month and beyond.

— Sam

SAS Program Statistics July—December 2010



Crisis Line Calls.....	138
Racine Hospital Visits.....	22
Burlington Hospital Visits.....	8
Legal Advocacy Sessions.....	39
New Counseling Clients.....	49
Counseling Sessions.....	399
Community Presentations.....	48
CAC Appointments.....	93



Sexual Assault Services
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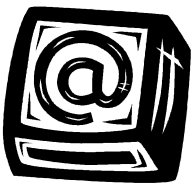
Contact Us!

SAS Racine Office
1220 Mound Ave. Suite 304
Racine, WI 53404
262-619-1634

SAS Burlington Office
480 S. Pine St.
Burlington, WI 53105
262-763-6226 Ext. 109

24 Hour Crisis Line: 262-637-SAFE (7233)

Stay Connected!



Join our News and Events email update list! Would you like to receive information on upcoming SAS events and volunteer opportunities? Email Samantha Sustachek at ssustachek@lsswis.org with "SAS news and events" in the subject line and she will include you in all SAS news and events related emails.

Sexual Assault Services seeks to create a safe and compassionate environment to help promote the healing of sexual assault survivors and their support people.

